

Supervisor Pam Slater's

# E-Slate

electronic newsletter

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## Scanners Abuse And Consumers Lose

What do a dog collar, that cute mini-skirt, shampoo, and macaroni and cheese have in common? They are items purchased at stores throughout San Diego County, items that you might have been overcharged for because of inaccurate scanners used to record their prices.

Do you trust that your items are scanned accurately? An investigation by county staff found five overcharges for every one undercharge on promotional items sold in this county. The overcharge averaged \$2.63! Multiply that times hundreds of thousands of customers! This is unacceptable and this is why supervisors next month will review changes to insure that store scanners are accurate.

These inaccuracies are troublesome and are reported across the retail sector – from pet stores to high-end retail clothing; from large grocery chains to small boutiques. It is unacceptable and it must stop. In statistics compiled between July 1999 and February 2003, county investigators found scanners failing to record proper prices on 45 percent of items sold at drug stores upwards of 73 percent on items purchased at department stores.

This is not to say these miscalculations are intentional. Many are not. But the systems being used to scan products must be accurate. Anything less is consumer abuse.

**ENDING ANIMAL CRUELTY ...** April is “Prevention of Animal Cruelty” month. Animal abuse is more than cruelty to an innocent puppy or kitten; experts now know animal abuse serves as a warning of greater violence against two-legged creatures.

Now you can learn how to recognize and prevent animal abuse during a special 6 to 7:30 p.m. April 17 seminar sponsored by the San Diego Humane Society. Designed for teachers, social workers, community leaders and interested citizens, the seminar will teach how to make San Diego a safer place for pets and people alike. Call (619) 299-7012, ext. 249, for more information.

**WORKING THE RAILS...** Coastal residents who want to stay abreast of plans to upgrade the Los Angeles to San Diego (LOSSAN) rail corridor will want to attend the following public workshops:

- 6 to 8 p.m. March 25 at the Encinitas Community Center, 1140 Oakcrest Drive.
- 6 to 8 p.m. March 26 at the Caltrans District 11 office, 2829 Juan St. in Old Town.
- 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. April 2 at the San Clemente Community Center, 100 N. Calle Seville.

Participants will review the various proposals for the corridor, including design options, routes and planned improvements.

**AND ITS TRAILS ...** Plans to develop a coordinated rail trail along coastal North County moved forward this week as directors of the North County Transit District passed guidelines for the long-awaited pathway. The 16-mile trail from Oceanside to Del Mar will provide a seamless path for walkers and bicyclists. The estimated \$18 million project will be funded through a variety of sources, including federal and state grants.

**ON SAFETY AND TERRORISM ...** With Operation Iraq Freedom under way, concerns turn to preventing any retribution against the United States, especially a terrorist activity in San Diego. Being alert, being cautious, being proactive is the key to being prepared. If you see anything that strikes you out of the ordinary, notify the nearest law enforcement officers.

Here is some other advice as offered by the county Department of Health and Human Services:

“Terrorism is the systematic use of fear to frighten and intimidate people. Terrorism can be conducted through violence and destruction, as we saw on Sept. 11, 2001, as well as through the use of chemical or biological weapons. The best way to save people exposed to a bioterrorist attack is early detection. As soon as you realize you may have been exposed to a bioterrorist agent, doctors or other medical providers can begin appropriate and life-saving medical measures. This means your doctor or health-care provider is the most important person for you to see if you think you have been exposed to a bioterrorist attack.

“The Health and Human Services Agency plays a critical role in being prepared for terrorism. Doctors, nurses and other medical staff can help confirm unusual diseases. The medical staff investigates to determine where exposure occurred and identifies people who need preventive medication. An unusual or suspicious disease should be reported to the county Office of Community Epidemiology at (619) 515-6620.”

**AT THE COUNTY...** Supervisors will be representing the county and its interests at legislative conferences scheduled for the next two weeks. The board returns to session on April 1 and 2.

**AND IN THE DISTRICT ...** Congratulations to Clay Phillips, who succeeds Rolf Gunnarson as city manager in Escondido. The 45-year-old Phillips has been with Escondido since 1986 and is known for its expertise in finance. ...

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